

Message Text

SECRET

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 SCCT-01 /057 W

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R 020645Z JUL 76

FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3311

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMSCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 0875

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IZ, SY

SUBJ: IRAQ-SYRIAN RELATIONS

1. IBRAHIM WALI, FOREIGN MINISTRY DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS, TOLD ME ON JUNE 28 THAT HE THOUGHT IRAQI ARMY BUILDUP ON SYRIAN BORDER HAD BEEN COMPLETED. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW HOW LONG TROOPS WOULD REMAIN ON BORDER, BUT MENTIONED IN PASSING THAT TROOPS MUST FIND IT VERY UNCOMFORTABLE IN THE DESERT NOW THAT SUMMER HEAT HAS COME TO IRAQ. HE NOTED THAT DESERT TEMPERATURE IN SUN CAN REACH AS HIGH AS 70 DEGREES CENTIGRADE (158 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT).

2. WALI ALSO PLAYED DOWN REPORTS OF KURDISH DISSIDENT ACTIVITY IN NORTHERN IRAQ. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT OCCASSIONALLY KURDS CROSS IRAQI BORDERS SURREPTITIOUSLY IN BOTH DIRECTIONS TO ENGAGE IN "BANDITRY" BUT DENIED THAT THIS ACTIVITY HAD ANY POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE IN LIGHT OF IRAQI ARMY'S THOROUGH

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CONTROL OF NORTHERN AREA.

3. WALI CLAIMED TO HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE RESULTS OF ARAFAT'S RECENT (JUNE 29) TRIP TO IRAQ. HE DID SAY THAT ARAFAT EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE BITTERNESS TOWARDS SYRIA, AND WAS OBVIOUSLY LOOKING FOR HELP.

4. COMMENT: WHILE UNFOLDING EVENTS IN LEBANON MAY GIVE IRAQIS NEW OPPORTUNITIES TO HAVE AT THEIR SYRIAN NEIGHBORS, IRAQ'S CURRENT EFFORTS IN THIS DIRECTION SEEM TO BE LOSING MOMENTUM. THE ATTEMPTS TO CREATE A "REJECTION FRONT" ARE FALTERING WITH ALGERIA OPTING OUT OF LEBANON AND LIBYA PREOCCUPIED WITH MEDIATION BETWEEN THE SYRIANS AND THE VARIOUS LEBANESE FACTIONS. SYRIA SEEMS TO BE MOVING AWAY FROM THE REJECTION FRONT AND IS ATTEMPTING TO PATCH UP RELATIONS WITH EGYPT THROUGH THE MEDIATING EFFORTS OF KUWAIT AND SAUDI ARABIA. IRAQI EFFORTS TO EMBARRASS SYRIA BY MOVING TROOPS TO THE BORDER HAVE HAD NO VISIBLE IMPACT AND TROOPS MAY NOW START TO WITHDRAW. IT MUST FURTHER ANNOY IRAQIS THAT SYRIANS HAVE ADROITLY USED JOINT ARAB FORCE WHICH IRAQIS INITIALLY SUPPORTED AS AN ANTI-SYRIAN MOVE, AS A CONVENIENCE TO REDUCE CRITICISM OF SYRIAN UNILATERAL INTERVENTION IN LEBANON. THE HOOPLA SURROUNDING THE ANTI-SYRIAN POPULAR CONFERENCE NOW BEING HELD IN BAGHDAD (SEPTTEL) WILL MAKE LITTLE IMPACT ON THE WORLD SCENE AND THE CONFERENCE HAS BEEN NOTEABLE PRIMARILY FOR THE ANONYMITY OF ITS PARTICIPANTS.

5. OUT OF FRUSTRATION AND FOR LACK OF FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES, WE WOULD NOW EXPECT IRAQIS TO CONCENTRATE MORE ON COVERT EFFORTS TO CREATE INTERNAL TROUBLE FOR SYRIAN REGIME. IRAQ HAS CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES FOR THESE PURPOSES IN THE SYRIAN EXILE COMMUNITY NOW IN BAGHDAD MANY OF WHOM WOULD NO DOUBT WELCOME AN OPPORTUNITY TO SETTLE OLD ACCOUNTS WITH SYRIAN LEADERSHIP.
WILEY

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